

# My Storybook Process (Part 1): creating a new thing

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/my-storybook-process-part-1-creating-a-new-thing/>

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Several people have asked me about my personal process for creating an illustrated storybook, and for the past several months now, I've been thinking about *how* to share that. The more I delve into the ways I could do it, the more I realize what an undertaking it really is.

As a writing and language coach, it's important to me that anything here actually be of use to people. The last thing I want is for me to just sit here and expound on story and such. That's why I really like getting emails, because that's where I learn what you want.

So in thinking about how to tackle this, I wanted to be sure that anything I shared with you would actually stick. I want this to be something you can really use in your projects.

To keep it as simple and straight forward as possible, I've decided to post my process *as I actually do it*. A great learning device is to learn-by-doing. This is pretty close. You'll learn by witnessing. You'll be able to see exactly how I get from the simple spark of an idea to a finished book.

You'll see my failures and how I deal with them, too. I'm going to put it all out there.

This is a real storybook that I'll be sharing with you as I go through the entire process. In past articles on GSB, I've created some make-believe pages and panel descriptions to use as examples of writing - things

I made up just for the sake of the article. Sometimes I grab samples from published books.

This is the first time I'm going to post-as-I-create a real book that I want to bring to the market. I'm a little nervous about it, but I think (and hope) it is a good idea.

## **The Deadline**

This year, I am currently working with three illustrators on three different storybooks and I am writing and illustrating other stories as well.

In all, I'm working on seven different books. To date, this is my most prolific year. When mid-October rolls around and it's time for the [International Book Fair in Frankfurt](#) (Buchmesse 2015), I'll be presenting those books to various editors and agents.

That means that all of these projects have the same deadline, including the storybook I'll be sharing with you here.

The project I'm going to share with you is one that I am writing and illustrating myself. The projects where I'm collaborating are Top Secret, so nothing I'm doing there can be shared until after publication.

## **What's Happening...**

**This story, published bit-by-bit on GSB along with my explanations and sub-processes and accidents - all before it is officially published and made available on the market - will be the first story of a new series tentatively called "Bunny and Witch Stories" – or something like that. I'm not entirely set on that series name.**

But at this point, you know that I've already thought a little bit about the two main characters and that the series will be all about them.

## **Picking the names and stuff**

I'm going with the names Bunny and Witch because I like the sound of it. It's really that simple. I like the way those words sound when I say them aloud. The names also yield immediate feelings and thoughts about who they might be – they are not at all alike, these two things. We tend to think of them as female (at least I do), but we don't generally put them in the same room.

That's what I want to do. I want to put two characters you'd never expect to know each other and make them – friends. Friends of a complicated sort, though. In different ways, they should antagonize each other. That's the general feeling I want for this. It's sort of an Abbot and Costello relationship.

I know I want the series to address proper manners and social behavior for really little kids, ages 3-6. That

age could easily stretch to 7 and 8, but those kids should really have this stuff nailed by then. I find that if a kid doesn't have words like *please* and *thank you* in their pocket before first grade, it just isn't happening. Still, I want the stories and the illustrations to be funny enough and attractive enough that it would still be entertaining to an older child.

I want the stories to be funny, sweet and simple. I don't want the stories to be about where the characters are, but how they are behaving. So the pages will probably have a white backdrop – simple, bare. The characters are the focal point of the story.

### Checking the market before continuing

This is where I'm at so far. I'm pretty familiar with what's on the market, but I did go online and looked for any books about this kind of theme. I always do that when I'm at this early development stage of a new book series. It's just a simple step, but a really important one.

#### Here's how to search the marketplace for your book concept:

Just do a simple search online using Google or your favorite searchtool. Enter the key words (see? I'm learning techie terms too!) that best describe the purpose of your book. This is really important. If your story is about how a child should properly act towards a baby, then do not type New Baby or New Sibling. The book isn't really about that.

Be more specific and don't be afraid to let the searchtool suggest entries for you. That can be extremely helpful, because it shows you exactly what search phrases other people are already using. That's really good! If they're searching for the type of book you want to write, then you're on the right track.

At this point in the search, you'll get all kinds of blogs and specialist websites. That's good. You need to know what's on the first couple of pages, because this tells you what articles are getting searched for and read the most.

Then do the search again with a small addition: "kids books about," or "kids books for."

What I found in searching for my type of book is that there are a ton of books about correct behavior in class and about anti-bullying stories. There are a handful of really good books that convey kindness and being polite and incorporating that into a story. I found some books that I want to check out. These look pretty darn good.

I'm going to check-out [Llama, Llama Mad at Mama](#) by Anna Dewdney, [Duck and Goose](#) by Tad Hills, [The Tale of Pip and Squeak](#) by Kate Duke and [Say Please, Little Bear](#) by Peter Bently and Rob McPhillips. These are the books that look good to me and that are fairly close to the type of books I want to create with Bunny and Witch.

While I found good books about my general theme, nothing really hit the idea of what it is I want to do, so that's good. It means that the niche is relatively open, and yet there's interest in it. This is a good balance.

Most of the books about this theme look like something a teacher would make you read in class, when you're still learning to sit still. I don't want my book to look or feel like a school reference on good behavior. I never liked those as a kid, and I'd be surprised if any kid does.

What this shows me though is that teachers are looking for good materials on this topic that they can readily use in a classroom. That gives me some things to think about... maybe after-reading questions are needed for this particular project.

I feel pretty confident about what I want to do here. I think I'm off to a good start.

### **Next week...**

By next week, I'll have my characters fleshed-out. After that... the particulars of the particular book. Look for the blow-by-blow beats as I go through this. The book has to be done in time for the October Book Fair. I cannot put it off. Subscribe to my newsletter and I'll send the stories directly to you.

What about you? What are you working on these days? Share below, let me know – or send me an email. I like those. Stick with it, stay on it, stay true to it, and then get it out there.

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**This entry is part of the series**

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[My Storybook Process \(Part 2\): creating new characters >>](#)

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